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**Testimony in Support of Bill 6637 - AN ACT REQUIRING AN INVASIVE SPECIES STAMP
FOR THE OPERATION OF A MOTORBOAT ON THE INLAND WATERS OF THE STATE**

**Before the Environment Committee – March 1st, 2019
By David Sutherland – Director of Government Relations**

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy's, I would like to express our support for Bill 6637. Modifications may be needed to this proposal to make it more administratively manageable, and we would support extending the eligibility of grants under this program to rivers and stream, but some significant source of funding to address invasive species in our waters is vital.

Our lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams are not only critical habitats for wildlife, but also a critical economic resource for Connecticut. One of the most serious threats to these resources are invasive plants and animal species that can render water bodies unsuitable for boating or swimming, and significantly degrade habitat for fish, other wildlife, and native plants.

For a variety of reasons, increasing numbers of invasive species are moving and being moved into our state. In many cases, early action when a new species is observed can stop its infestation of a water body. Deferring action often results in vastly more elaborate and costly control measures.

Boats being moved from water body to water body are the leading vectors for spread of invasives. Therefore, it is appropriate that boaters pay a small amount each year to address this threat to the very places on which their activities depend. It is crucial that this fee be deposited in a fund dedicated solely to addressing invasive species in our lakes and rivers.

In 2015 and 2016, funding was approved by the General Assembly for grants to control aquatic invasives. Demand for the grants far outstripped the \$250,000 and \$300,000 that was allocated. We would certainly support a straight appropriation for invasives control, but believe that a stamp and fee as proposed in Bill 6637 would be a more feasible and appropriate method for funding.